T/SOR/49/1/9


# DOCKERS CHARTER

Published by the Liverpool Dock Shop Stewards Committee – 50p (20p for unwaged) No. 14 April 1997

1. No return to casual labour.
2. Real jobs in a profitable and expanding port for the unemployed of Merseyside.
3. No victimisation. All sacked workers to be reinstated.
4. Reinstate trade union recognition, and recognise elected shop stewards.

# UNSHACKLE THE UNIONS!

## LABOUR MUST REPEAL ANTI–UNION LAWS

**INTERNATIONAL workers' day, 1 May, will be marked this year in Britain by a general election and millions are already saying 'good riddance' to the Tories.**

**Around the world many millions of workers' will also be watching events here in the birthplace of the trade unions. Over and over again, in the last 18 months of our dispute, we have been asked in each and every country: 'How could the working class in such a bastion of trade unionism as Britain come under the heel of these draconian anti-trade union laws?'**

Our own union, the Transport and General Workers Union is celebrating its 75th year in 1997. Its founder members included the dockers, who had successfully established Trade Unionism in the ports in the 1889 strike for the 'dockers' tanner. Yet it is over 18 months since we were sacked for refusing to cross a picket line and our union will not support us for fear of breaking the law and having its funds sequestrated!

### CLASS

With the honourable exceptions of the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Union of Seafarers, the leaders of every union in Britain refused to break these laws, and refused to act in solidarity with those who did. It seems that events in 1972 when the working class threatened general strike and forced the release of the imprisoned dockers (the Pentonville Five — arrested for secondary picketing) frightened the trade union leaders as much as the ruling class.

It was when workers combined together in trade unions that they were able to change their conditions of work, increase their wages and introduce pension schemes. And the unions were formed so that employers could not isolate workers and deal with them as individuals. The unions were there to protect workers. But more — it was the organized workers that protected the less fortunate, fighting for the National Health Service, free education, old age and disability pensions. And it was trade unionists that fought for workers' internationalism.

The anti-trade-union laws are crucial for the employers to take back all our gains, and divide the working class both here and internationally.

And the laws imposed without a fight in Britain (now known as 'Thatcher's Laws') are being imposed by governments in countries throughout the world where the right to organize trade unions, the right to strike and the right to act in solidarity with fellow workers has been taken for granted for generations. Our brothers and sisters in Australia are in a battle against a Tory government which is hell-bent on imposing such laws.

### GENERATION

How can we call ourselves free men and women if we have no right to combine together in unions for our own protection and for the protection of future generations? We cannot! So we must fight to unshackle the unions.

Many many workers are disturbed that Tony Blair says that a Labour government will not repeal the laws. But unions must once again protect their members, and if the union leadership doesn't make that clear to a Labour government, then we are sure that the members *will* make it clear.

A change here will not only assist other workers to resist the laws, it will also strengthen the fight of workers facing imprisonment, torture and execution in the many countries where trade unions are outlawed.

So we welcome you to the March for Social Justice, and say:

**KICK THE TORIES OUT!**
**REPEAL THE ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS!**

*J. Nolan* — Chairman
Mersey Port Shop Stewards Committee

Liverpool's Robbie Fowler showing support for the sacked dockers after scoring his second goal in the Cup Winners' Cup tie against SK Brann on 19 March. See letters page 8.

People's Charter for Social Justice PAGES 4&5

# JAPANESE DOCKERS FIGHT CASUALISATION

## Like going back to days of mafia

Takinobu Itoh presents a banner to the Liverpool dockers signed by members of the All Japan Dockers Unions

**TAKINOBU ITOH, Assistant General Secretary of the National Council of Dockworkers' Unions of Japan (NCDW — SENKOKU KOWAN), addressed a mass meeting of Liverpool dockers on 27 February.**

Along with dockers in 27 countries around the world, Japanese dockers and seafarers held stop-work meetings in 50 ports on 20 January in solidarity with the sacked Liverpool dockers. The NCDW has donated 2.5 million yen (£15,000) to the Liverpool dockers and their families.

In Japan the dockers are are fighting against deregulation and casualistion in the ports. On 28 February they took part in further stop-work meetings and on 12 March they held a 24-hour strike.

'ATTACKS made by shipping companies have become international,' said Takinobu. 'To stand against this trend, we dockers should protect ourselves by global solidarity. The International Day of Action held on 20 January marked a new page for international solidarity of dockers around the world. 'I have no doubt that you, Liverpool dockers, who have a long history of struggle of over a century, will play a key role in uniting the worldwide dockers through your struggle, and eventually achieve a glorious victory.

'I am very happy to be here to demonstrate our strong support and sincere solidarity towards your struggle,' he said. 'Surely, words are not enough to describe the concerns of your families who have shared your hardships in keeping up the struggle to live.

### PORTS

'It is a matter of course that you should reject and stand against the attacks of Mersey Dock and Harbour Company who are forcing you to work as part-timers or casual labourers. 'The endless competition of the shipping companies in cutting down their costs has resulted in total sacrifice on the side of the dockers . . . It is like going back to the days when mafia groups controlled the ports.

'In a broader sense, this struggle of yours is a fight against a change for the worse in Labour Law promoted by the Thatcher and Major governments from the '80s until now with the aim to weaken labour unions.

'We knew the National Dock Labour Scheme in your country was abolished in 1989, but it was not until we heard news of the struggle in Liverpool that we learnt about the great impact upon the Transport and General Workers' Union and the ongoing privatisation of ports.

'I am a member of the All Japan Dockworkers' Union which was 50 years old last year. The union was established soon after the Second World War in the hope of realizing our own National Dock Labour Scheme.

'Our efforts have been supported by the solidarity action of dockers in the Asian Pacific region.

'Although the Dockers' Act in Japan was enacted in 1966, it was not the kind of law we had all awaited. Nevertheless, it is rated as one of the few industrial labour systems in Japan, which requires dockers employed by stevedore companies and casual labourers to be registered at Public Employment Security Offices.

'Ever since the Dockers' Act, permanent employment of dockers became popular and now a great majority of them are employed by stevedore and handling companies. 'The revision made to our Dockers' Act in 1989 means that extra labourers required to comply with the fluctuating labour demand are dispatched from centres jointly operated by stevedore and handling companies. The recent labour-saving measures promoted in the field of port labour, however, have been a great threat to the very existence of these centres. At present restructuring of consortiums is carried out by shipping companies, including consolidation of container terminals. This has resulted in employment insecurity for those working in container terminals. Foreign shipping companies, who want to have the freedom of selecting terminals without any restrictions, complain that the preliminary agreement system with labour unions in Japan is unfair and discriminating to them.

'The European Union has made an appeal to the World Trade Organization on the issue.

### PENALTY

'The Federal Maritime Committee in the US has also followed suit claiming that they will charge a penalty of $100,000 for every Japanese vessel entering US ports.

'In our country industrial collective bargaining is established by the NCDUJ and Japan Harbour Transport Association which is an organization of stevedore and handling companies. Preliminary talks are now under way to prepare for the introduction of a new transport measure along with other issues.

'Shipping companies only consult with Japan Harbour Transport Association instead of dealing directly in labour issues. They are now criticizing the system they themselves have approved in the past, pressuring the Japanese government to intervene in labour-management agreements.

'It is undeniable that this attitude is illogical. At the request of the NCDUJ, the International Transport workers Federation (ITF) has protested to the EU on the issue.

'Last December the Japanese Ministry of Transport announced its policy of promoting deregulation in ports. It is anticipated that free entries in the stevedore business will attract shippers, overland transport companies and foreign terminal companies to seek business opportunities. Wharfs will be operated by private companies.

'This will surely cause dismissal of many dockers and worsening of labour conditions. The government is also planning an undesirable amendment of the system to weaken labour unions as part of their deregulation policy in the labour field.

'. . .This struggle has a long way to go since it is an appeal to the government to establish a new job security system for dockers in Japan.

'I strongly support your proposal to set up a "Hiring Hall in the Port of Liverpool". Let us join hands and establish a system to provide stable employment and living conditions for all dockers.

### TRADITION

'Victory to the Liverpool dockers! Hurrah to international solidarity of dockers!

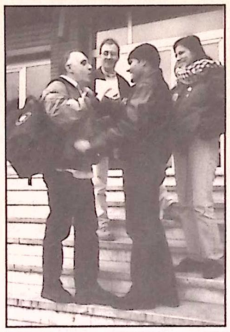
'Lastly, I would like to offer you this red banner that I brought from Japan. It is a tradition in the Japanese labour movement to send a red banner, autographed by the comrades to demonstrate their support and encouragement to a struggle.

The autographs on this banner were made by those who attended the central committee meeting of All Japan Dockers' Union held last week.'

## 'Getting to know you. . .'

**BILLY Jenkins and Tony Russell went to Switzerland and Italy. In our pictures: Billy shows Andreas (Swiss) a copy of Dockers Charter in the office of one of the Italian host organisations and Tony (centre) and Billy on the steps at the port of Genoa in Italy with Andreas and another host.**

**'One of the best things is staying in comrades' homes. It means we can really get to know them,' said Billy. Tony has been known to some of us as 'Tony Russelli' since his previous Italian visits.**



## AUSTRALIA

TERRY Southers, Tony Russell and Kevin Robinson have returned from a three-week visit to every state in Australia.

We will have to let them get their breath back before we ask them for a report and photographs for Dockers Charter.

But we promise a full report from down under in the next issue. In the meantime let's just say that it has been a breathtakingly successful visit.

Our Aussie brothers and sisters have come up trumps and the delegation has been able to impart a few 'home truths' about 'Thatcher's laws' which the Australian Tory government is trying to impose on the trade unions there.

## So friendly!

'HELLO!' said sacked docker, Herbie Hollerhead opening his report to 400 Danish post office/telecom workers.

'HELLO!' replied the 400 in one voice and everybody laughed! 'That's what it was like all over Denmark, really friendly and welcoming,' Herbie told us. 'That's not to say that we weren't tired out after 127 meetings in 14 days. 'Tony Gardner was so tired when he got to the home of one of our hosts — Michael, that he just fell into bed.

You can imagine his surprise when he woke up in the night and saw a huge rat in a cage in the corner of the room. "Oh it's OK, his name is Rebel, he's on our side!" Michael told him.' The delegation returned to Liverpool with 20,000 kroner (£1,800) and lots of newfound comrades who have invited them back for May Day.

They met printworkers, careworkers, metalworkers as well as dockers in SID the general workers' union. 'Most impressive,' said Herbie was the union school.

We addressed two rallies. There were 100 shop stewards at one and the other was the 400 post office workers faced with privatization.

## EURO MARCH

- **Full Employment Across Europe!**
- **Defend Europe's Welfare Provision!**
- **Scrap the Job Seekers'Allowance!**

Marchers leave Preston on 17 May, Jarrow on 19 May. The Scottish leg will join the Jarrow marchers. On 31st May there will be a rally in Birmingham, and on 6 June the march will arrive at the Hillingdon hospital workers'picket. There is a civic reception in the evening.

On 7 June it is Hillingdon to Hyde Park and from there a march to Central Hall, Westminster.

On Sunday a reception, and on Monday the march leaves for Holland. . . . events in Amsterdam are on the week-end of 14-15 June. The latest news is that there is likely to be a Turkish leg of the march.

**More information** Glen Voris, St. Helens TUC Resource Centre, 21-31 Barrow Street, St. Helens WA10 1RX. Tel: 01744 755889.

## Iranian workers tortured and executed

**THE IRANIAN regime will have a free hand in the killing fields, if we do not act now!**

● Eight political prisoners were put in front of the firing squad on 21 February. Among these were: Kayvan Shakeri, born 1964 — a political prisoner from 1985-1990; Mehrdad Moghdam, born 1961 — prisoner from 1984-1989; Alireza Majdi, born 1957 — prisoner from 1984-1989; Farhad Ghaem, born 1959 — prisoner from 1984-1989.

● Abass Ghaddiri, a worker from Behpush factory, who was captured during the mass uprising in Islamshahr, was executed by firing squad on 10 November 1996, together with 11 others.

● The tortured body of Gholamreza Afshar, who spent four years as a prisoner was found in Kowiteh.

He had been tortured and hanged. He escaped from Iran to Pakistan to find safe refuge. On 18 October 1996, he and Ali Molai were travelling to Islamabad to check on their refugee status. They were captured by an Islamic regime hit squad. The body of Ali Molai was thrown out 70km outside of Islamabad on 22 October.

● When the oil workers demanded a wage increase and a national contract on 16 February this year, 300 of them were arrested in Tehran. Information has been received that two of them Hashem Kamely and Gholam Barzegar were killed in prison.

### REGIME

● According to a statement from Iranian Workers' Left Unity (England) a further 50 oil workers (among them some oil refinery workers' representatives) involved in direct confrontation with the Iranian regime over a wage increase, resumption of group negotiations and other related demands. No news of their whereabouts had been given to their families.

● The oil refineries are under heavy presence of the security forces and a semi-martial law has been imposed.

The Islamic regime in Iran uses torture, terror and hostages to achieve its aim outside its borders. It is confronting the mass struggle of the workers, of the poor, of nationality and religious minorities and millions of women and intellectuals with torture, terror, the machine gun and helicopter gunship.

Everything at its disposal is used to silence the masses of workers who have become destitute as a result of economic mismanagement and suppression of their right to organize their independent unions, national contracts and the right to strike.

Protest to: Hojjatolislam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, The Presidency, Plastine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Iran.

*Contact: Workers' Left Unity PO Box 3646, London SW11 5YT.*

# Setting the record straight?

## The Liverpool dockers respond to Bill Morris' article published in the *T&G Record* (February/March 1997)

**500 LIVERPOOL DOCKERS were dismissed in Sepetember 1995 by the port authority, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC), for defending basic trade union principles.**

They refused to cross a picket line. Within 24 hours the dockers received their dismissal notices.

Most importantly, the reason for dismissal was given as 'being in breach of their contract of employment', not for being on unofficial strike.

From these simple facts a very complex tale evolves, incorporating events prior to and following the dockers' dismissal. Sadly, our general secretary fails to comprehend these important facts and developments.

### STRUGGLE

Thus, the opportunity exists for him to construct arguments that at best confuse and at worst undermine, the heroic struggle of men and women determined to attain their reinstatement amidst overwhelming difficulties.

Central to their campaign has been the dockers' insistence on the removal of all scab/casual labour currently being used by Mersey Docks. This primary issue Bill Morris has refused to acknowledge.

Instead, the official position of the T&G is two-pronged. Firstly, to alleviate the hardship of the dockers' families and secondly, to seek a negotiated settlement.

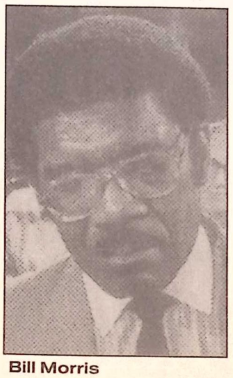
Financial support to the dockers' hardship fund from the union has been £500,000. This money is much needed and welcome. This is the equivalent of £15 per week to each dockers' family. The union has helped in developing our proposals for a labour supply company.

Unfortunately the union and Mersey Docks have chosen KPMG Peat Marwick to develop this business plan. KPMG are the Mersey Docks' registrars and were used to undervalue Medway dockers' shares. The union took KPMG to court over this matter, thus the dockers have little confidence in their involvement. No doubt time will tell.

The paucity of our union's strategy rests upon the so-called unofficial/illegal nature of the dockers' dispute.

In 'Setting the Record Straight', Bill Morris distorts basic issues so that his pre-conceived conclusion is supported by his inaccurate introduction. As a result the general secretary spends little time upon real issues, preferring instead to launch invective against John Pilger.

1. The core of our union's selective inactivity relies upon the premise that the Liverpool dockers are involved in an unofficial/illegal dispute because they



Bill Morris

failed to conduct a ballot.

Two weeks before their dismissal by Mersey Docks management, the Torside dockers held an official ballot over enforced redundancies and the introduction of casual labour by Torside. Following an 86 per cent vote in favour of legal, official action, Torside withdrew their demands. Two weeks later they dismissed all their 80 young dockers.

### REFUSED

Between 1989 and 1995 the Liverpool dockers, through their Docks and Waterways Regional Trade Group, requested on four occasions an official ballot relating to job losses, privatisation and casualisation. These requests were refused by the union for various reasons; on-going negotiations, companies no longer trading, the illegality of holding ballots amongst different companies albeit direct subsidiaries of Mersey Docks etc.

The complaints and concerns of the Liverpool dockers are adequately recorded in the Minutes of the union's Region No. 6 Committee over a long period of time. Indeed, at least two meetings took place in London with Bill Morris.

Identifying these various concerns at the last meeting which took place in 1994 with Bill Morris, the dockers' stewards spoke of the increasing chaos in the port that could result in the dockers' dismissal if the union continued to fail to act. Three formal complaints were made about the local Docks Officer and a regional inquiry again failed to respond fully to the concerns of the dockers in 1993.

Indeed, the question begs to be asked: why didn't the union organise a legal ballot in September 1995? Nevertheless, the Liverpool dockers have always maintained that their action is neither official nor illegal. They were sacked for being in breach of contract. For

Ed Hall's design for the head of the Liverpol dockers' March for Social Justice, London 12 April 1997

18 months they have had no employer. In law a strike takes place between an employer and employees.

If this is an illegal dispute no social benefits would be paid to the dockers. This must be the first illegal/unofficial strike in which the employer regularly praises the union and conducts equally regular meetings with them. Mersey Docks emphasise it is not a strike — the dockers have been dismissed.

Obviously, Bill Morris wants to 'preserve the fabric of the union'. Why did he not repudiate immediately the action of the dockers? Despite one or two aspects of sabre rattling by Mersey Docks, no legal proceedings have been actioned over the last 19 months.

2. However, the article insists that Torside Ltd. dockers had nothing to do with Mersey Docks. Obviously this is a repetition of Mersey Docks' view.

Why then were the young Torside dockers interviewed by Mersey Docks senior managers at Mersey Docks headquarters in 1991?

Why were the Port Shop Stewards informed by the union's Docks Officer that Mersey Docks sought their approval to establish Torside?

*Torside dockers were trained and given certificates to drive plant and machinery by Mersey Docks.* All facilities belonged to Mersey Docks.

Why did two managers of Mersey Docks breach the contract of the Torside dockers, insisting that they work contrary to normal practice?

Importantly, Torside dockers were regularly employed by Mersey Docks working alongside Mersey Docks' dockers.

3. The remainder of the article makes reference to the John Pilger article. Suffice to say that one has to question the logic of refusing to give interviews to either John Pilger or Ken Loach. If John Pilger is an ultra-left journalist, where does that leave all other journalists that Bill Morris gives interviews to?

The sacked Liverpool dockers welcome open debate, discussion and criticism. Last Christmas *a reporter and cameraman from the T&G Record spent a week with the Liverpool dockers.*

*No article was published in the T&G Record. The question again has to be asked:* why the Liverpool docks dispute has never been covered in the Record over the last 18 months?

Whilst feelings run high in any dispute, especially one that lasts for 18 months, involving men and women who have given their lives to that industry, the Liverpool dockers have attempted to avoid open confrontation with our union.

This policy will continue, but only to a certain point of acceptability

Meanwhile, we express our deepest gratitude to all who have maintained the principle of supporting all workers in struggle. This support must include the heroic struggle of the Magnet and Hillingdon workers.

Sacked dockers, Dennis Connolly ( centre) and Marty Size, meet Japanese dockers' leader Akinobu Itoh (see story page 2)

# Brazilian dockers fight casualisation

**BRAZILIAN dockers have occupied two vessels, the 'Marcos Dias' and the 'Vancouver' moored in the port of Santos, in the berth owned by COSIPA (the Sao Paulo Steel Company).**

**They are protesting at the proposed contracting-out of cargo handling by COSIPA. This is traditionally dockers' work, and now they fear contract/casual labour will be used. Santos dockers were on strike from 2-5 April and there was a general stoppage in all Brazilian ports on 3 April. COSIPA solicited the intervention of the army.**

### JUDGE

**This unprecedented process was authorised by Judge Mario Roberto Negreiros Vellose, of the Second Civil Jurisdiction of Cubatao. At the request of the company, three days earlier, this same judge had requested the intervention of the Sao Paulo state military police.**

**This was refused on the grounds that this was an 'improper order' which could lead to unnecessary confrontations. Nevertheless three workers were injured in clashes on Saturday 5 April, and it is feared that much more serious confrontations will occur if the company continues with its intransigence in ending the use of port workers for cargo handling in its maritime terminal.**

### DEFENCE

**The workers occupying the two ships explain that they are in simply in their place of work and in defence of their jobs. They say there is nothing to concede.**

**Any retreat on their part would signify the end of the mechanisms of the Law of the Ports, of Decree 1886/96 and Convention 137 of the International Labour Organisation. The work in the ports is exclusively for port workers. Santos Union's fax is 00 55 13 232 4877.**

# FINEST TRAD

**WHEN the Liverpool dockers, along with others, decided to sponsor The People's Charter for Social Justice, they were standing in the finest traditions of the British working-class movement For it was 160 years ago that the British working class burst onto the political scene around a series of six demands incorporated into The People's Charter.**

The last great Chartist rally, Kennington Common, 10 April 1848.

The actual authorship of the Charter is a matter of dispute — some believe it was drafted by Francis Place, a man active in radical politics since the time of the French Revolution, while others attribute its authorship to William Lovett, who was to become a prominent leader of the moderate wing of the Chartist movement.

But we do know that it was launched in January 1837 by a body known as the London Working Men's Association, *an organisation that had been set up by a group of skilled craftsmen in the capital.*

*Its demands were:*

- *Universal suffrage;*
- No property qualifications for voters;
- Constituencies of equal size;
- Payment for MPs;
- Vote by secret ballot.

There was nothing particularly new about such demands.

## FRANCHISE

Indeed similar demands had been made in radical and working-class circles from the 1780s onwards, levelled against the 'Old Corruption' which had seen parliament elected on the narrowest of franchises and used to line the pockets of a few parasites.

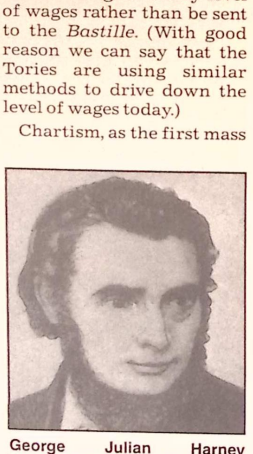
But what was new was that by the late 1830s the changes in British economy and society that had been associated with the 'industrial revolution' had brought into being a new class, the modern working class, based in the towns and working in the factories for wages.

This class was almost completely excluded from political power. The House of Commons was dominated by a combination of the landed aristocracy and the capitalist class of factory owners.

This latter group had won the right to vote in the 1832 Reform Act, after making use of the strength of the working class to secure their own selfish interests. The first major Act of this reformed parliament came in 1834 with the Poor Law Amendment Act.

The old system of aid to the poor and unemployed was scrapped. In its place came the hated workhouse - *known in working-class circles as the Bastille* — where prison discipline, hunger, separation of families, monotonous and at times senseless work in workhouses were designed by the factory owners to create such dread of this 'aid' that workers would agree to any level of wages rather than be sent to the *Bastille*. (With good reason we can say that the Tories are using similar methods to drive down the level of wages today.)

Chartism, as the first mass revolutionary movement of the working class in the world, was born out of a struggle against the New Poor Law; out of a bitter frustration at the way the working class had been used to secure the vote for their enemies; as well as out of the unemployment and misery that was increasingly associated with the capitalist system.



George Julian Harney Prominent leader of the left wing of the Chartist movement, outstanding internationalist and close collaborator of Marx and Engels

Looking back over those 160 years since the Charter was first drawn up, what stands out about the Chartist movement is:

- **Its mass working-class participation.** This was no movement simply of 'leaders'. Chartism drew into its orbit tens and hundreds of thousands of the most exploited and oppressed who were suffering bitterly in the 'hungry forties'.

The main paper of the movement, The *Northern Star*, had a readership of well over 10,000 — a remarkable figure for that period.

It attracted a lively correspondence and contributions, including poems from its working-class readers. In 1842 the National Charter Association had some 50,000 members, almost three times the number of only a year earlier.

**Anybody actively participating in the fight for the Charter was considered a member.**

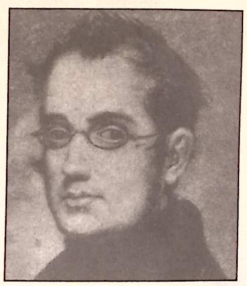
The petition of 1842 demanding the implementation of the Charter was, according to the *Star* supported by a march of 500,000, while even *The Times*, a bitter opponent of the movement, was forced to admit to a figure of 50,000.

- **The wide variety of struggles that united under its banner.** Chartism was the culmination of a long history of struggles in the British working-class and radical movements — the fight for the free press, the struggle for trade unionism, the right to freedom of speech and assembly.

At its height, the Chartist movement was the focus of the struggle for free trade unionism as well as the fight against the hated Poor Law. In many ways the Chartist movement reached its peak in the summer of 1842 with the general strike that swept through the towns of Lancashire and west Yorkshire.

The strike was met with the full might of the capitalist state, underlining the thoroughly political character of the struggle.

A notable feature of the movement was the active participation of women in its struggles, although it was not yet ready to accept a demand for women's suffrage. In the industrial areas of the country especially, it was a movement firmly under the control of the working class.



Joseph Rayner Stephens Methodist preacher and advocate of 'physical force' as a means of winning the Charter. Insisted that Chartinsm was a 'knife and fork' question.

As Karl Marx, a close follower of the movement and confidant of some of its most prominent leaders, said: *Chartism was purely a working men's cause freed from all bourgeois elements'.*

- **The great range of methods that its leaders and activists employed in order to realise the Charter.**

The Chartist movement embraced every form of struggle — from petitions to parliament to armed insurrection, as in Newport, 1839.

While the demands of the Charter of 1837 were not particularly new, in the midst of the rapid social and political changes then taking place in the condition of the newly-emerging working class, they meant many different, even opposed, things to different people.

For some, the more respectable elements in the working class, the Charter meant simply the extension of the right to vote to the working class. Such elements constituted the 'moral wing' of the movement that believed that everything should be achieved peacefully and gradually, by means of petitions to parliament and the like.

This wing of Chartism drew its principal strength from cities such as Birmingham, which were dominated not by factories and mines but by small craft workshops where workers were inclined to see the solution to their problems in upward mobility — that is in themselves becoming masters.

For others Chartism meant something quite different. It meant the *political* means of solving the mounting *social* problems of the working class — unemployment, low wages, poverty, etc. that were increasingly being experienced by the working class in the towns and cities of the north of England.

## CLASS

That is why, although the Charter was initially drawn up by those skilled workers who operated in close alliance with sections of the radical middle class, its demands were seized upon by distinctly working-class organisations. Thus the London Democratic Association, led by George Julian Harney (1817-1897) and the Great Northern Union, led by Feargus O'Connor (1794-1855) — both proletarian organisations — took up the slogans of the Charter. (It was Harney, an internationalist to his finger tips, who was later responsible for the first translation of The *Communist Manifesto* into English.)

## FIGHT

For one of the main leaders of the left wing of Chartism, the Methodist preacher Joseph Rayner Stephens, Chartism was a 'knife and fork question', the right of every man to have a decent coat on his back and a decent hat on his head.

Leaders such as Stephe and the workers of the nor who followed them form the 'physical wing' of th

## A Chart

Go! cotton lor
Go! Ye who liv
But let be seen
The giver a

Go! treasure well
With crown and
Despite you all — w
And have our

You forge no more
Your cankering
We heed you not
But you can't

You've lagg
Your helmsmen
And now we'll be
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Our lives are not you
Our rights your
Give all their own
But ours shall be

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# TIONS

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nterests.

Although Chartism
ched its peak in 1842, one
y in its history will al-
ays be remembered — 10

## Chorus

orn lords, go!
om and acre,
e law between
he taker.

ur miser's store
oss and sabre!
break your thrall,
and labour.

you fold no more
ains about us;
e need you not,
without us.

too long
were knavish;
s bold and free,
e and slavish.

heaves to glean —
les to barter;
n cot to throne,
IE CHARTER.

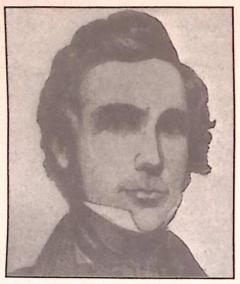
*June 1846)*

**160 years ago the British working class burst onto the political scene around a series of six demands incorporated into The Peoples Charter, launched in 1837.**

April, 1848, the day of the great assembly on Kennington Common, where some 40,000, many strongly influenced by revolutionary developments in Continental Europe, were present despite massive intimidation.

The day opened with the military, under the control of the Duke of Wellington in command of 7,000 armed soldiers, 4,000 police and 85,000 special constables — many of whom were also armed.

All the bridges across the Thames were heavily



**William Lovett Prominent leader of the 'moral force' wing of Chartism.**

guarded as the government insisted that there would be no march from Kennington Common to the House of Commons. There were deep divisions among the Chartist leadership about how to deal with this ban. Some, such as the left-wing leader Ernest Jones, had favoured calling on the workers from the north, many of them armed and drilled, to resist it.

Others, especially Bronterre O'Brien, urged caution and acceptance of the police diktat, on the grounds that this would win middle class support for the cause. Yet others, such as O'Connor, thought that the important thing was to assemble the greatest numbers, for here lay the strength of Chartism. In the event, 10 April went off in a largely peaceful manner.

A small delegation took the petition in support of the Charter to the House of Commons, where it was summarily rejected This is not the place to tell the detailed story of the Chartist Movement. But the strong police and military presence made sure that the mass could not cross the bridge, and there was no march on Parliament on 10 April 1848.

Chartism was finally defeated in that year, due in part to divisions within its leadership and its ranks. But whatever its weaknesses, Chartism was defeated not because its methods were wrong but because it came too soon. By the middle of the last century Britain was becoming the Workshop of the World, dominating world trade.

### CONDITIONS

On the basis of its powerful monopoly position, British capital experienced a powerful boom from the 1850s onwards.

Gradually an aristocracy of labour emerged which enjoyed marked privileges — not only higher wages than the unskilled workers but more regular employment, better housing conditions and so on.

As is clear to everybody, British capital has long ago lost that monopoly position. Its industries survive on the basis of the drive against wages, of the denial of trade union rights to millions of workers. The ruling class is now driven to take back all those concessions it yielded to the working class over the last 150 years since the demise of Chartism.

In the deepest sense Chartism is not dead. At the time it arose it represented the profoundest needs of millions of workers — the need for their own independent political organisation as a means of tackling the profound economic and social problems that capitalism was imposing upon them.

In a real sense we can say, whatever has happened in the intervening 150 years, that is once more the situation facing the working class in Britain today.

# MEETING

**Saturday 31 May 1997, 11am-5pm**
**Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London**
to discuss:

# THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Provisional third draft (February 20th 1997)**

*Launched by the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee.*

## WE, THE PEOPLE, demand social justice:

**1. Immediate reinstatement** with full trade union rights of the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers, the Magnet workers, the Hillingdon hospital workers and all other unjustly sacked workers.

**2. The right to join a trade union,** to strike, to respect picket lines and to take solidarity action. Immediate repeal of all anti-union legislation.

**3. The right to work**, and to job-security. Reversal of the policies of casualisation, privatisation and deregulation. Democratic planning to secure full employment. No compulsory overtime. Acknowledgement of the value of low- waged and unwaged work: equal pay for work of equal value.

**4. The right to recreation** and to assembly: repeal of the Criminal Justice Act.

**5. Defence of the Welfare State**. Abolition of the Job Seekers' Allowance. Free education including nursery and university provision; free health-care; adequate pensions and benefits for all, equal rights and social provision for people with disabilities, the sick and for all minority groups.

**6. The right to a home**. Emergency measures to house the homeless, including occupation of vacant or underused properties. Defence of the rights of travellers.

**7. Repeal of all discriminatory legislation.** Defence of the right of asylum. Equal rights for all, regardless of ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexuality or creed. The right of community self-defence against racist, sexist, or other violence.

**8. The right of citizenship wiithin a democracy.** Abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. Peace with justice in Ireland through the withdrawal of British troops. Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

**9. The right to a future for our children.** Emergency action to reverse national and global pollution and devastation of the planet's resources. Action to curb the private car and road lobbies and to reclaim our streets; implementation of an integrated public transport system. The right to clean air, water and food. Abolition of the nuclear power industry.

**10. The right of workers to organise internationally** to resist injustice and oppression, to reclaim the planet and to put an end to war. Abolition of the nuclear weapons industry. An end to all trade in arms and instruments of torture.

**JOBS! HOMES! A FUTURE!**

# Your letters. . .

## Value of unwaged work

We are responding to your invitation to comment on the People's Charter draft published in issue No. 13 March 1997.

Unfortunately you did not publish the latest version of the Charter, in which Point 3 includes, "Acknowledgement of the value of low-waged and unwaged work: equal pay for work of equal value."

Women do the bulk of unwaged work and a disproportionate amount of low-waged work, but there are certainly plenty of men who are low-waged in Britain, and because of women's campaigning on the issue, there is increasing recognition of the unwaged work that men do. *The Times* recently acknowledged that workers (women and men) spent what amounts to an extra day a week travelling to and from paid employment. And men of colour and men with disabilities often suffer, like women, from a lack of 'equal pay for work of equal value'.

Point 3 should demand a shorter working week since Britain has the longest in Europe.

And since the whole dispute began with the sacking of a docker who refused overtime in order to go home to his wife and newborn baby, it seems appropriate to demand paid maternity and paternity leave.

Point 3 would then read (amendments underlined): "The right to work, to job security, *and to work less*. Reversal of the policies of casualisation, privatisation and deregulation. *A living wage, a shorter working week, the right to paid maternity and paternity leave*. Democratic planning to secure full employment. No compulsory overtime. Acknowledgement of the value of low-waged and unwaged work: equal pay for work of equal value.

Finally the Charter should be handed in to the leaders of all three political parties to emphasise that these demands are made on the British government, whichever political party may be in power.

*Giorgio Giandomenici*
PAYDAY Men's Network
PO Box 287
London NW6 5QU

## Hours, racism, royals

Our Manchester group has been on the Liverpool pickets and consults with Women of the Waterfront. Our London group makes weekly collections for WOW and the Hillingdon strikers, and regularly attends meetings for the 12 April [Social Justice] march.

The Charter must call for a shorter working week. If a man works long hours, his partner is forced to stretch her working day to the jobs he hasn't time for. How are children to have a future if they haven't even a right to spend time with the parents they live with?

We feel strongly that anti-racism must be more clearly stated. We suggest: "Repeal of all racist and other discriminatory laws".

On point 8, whether we like the Royal Family or not can't divide us. People enjoy gossip about the Royal Family as they do about movie stars. That doesn't mean they're less committed to social justice. We see the Charter as a tool to help build the movement, not as a test of "political correctness", so we would rather take this point out.

Power to the sisters and therefore the working class movement,

*Patricia Juno*
Wages for Housework Campaign
Box 14, 1 Newton Street,
Manchester M1 1HW

## The right to be heard

'As a group I feel we should continue to be associated with the dockers' movement. We will hopefully continue to attend the weekly meetings with the London Dockers Support Group. Here is a contribution to the discussion on the People's Charter for Social Justice:

THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD: All people have the basic right to be heard and respected. Homeless people should not be excluded from this. We should challenge and change the attitude towards homeless people.

*Alan Henry, Secretary*
STREETLIFE
Battlebridge Centre,
2-6 Battlebridge Road,
London, NW1. Tel: 0171 713 7331

# The battle goes on

## Magnet

A BOOST for the eight-month strike at Magnet Kitchens, Darlington, came with the TUC decision to print tens of thousands of leaflets backing the strike.

Ian Crammond, secretary of the strike committee, says 'The strikers and and our excellent ambassadors, the Women's Support Group, are addressing meetings everywhere and the TUC leaflets assist our national campaign calling for a boycott by prospective customers of Magnet.

'Our information from inside the factory suggests that the company has offered to buy the contracts of the scabs and are offering new contracts at a lower rate of pay — we told them last August this would happen.

### CAMPAIGN

Now the scabs require the services of the unions to help them! 'Cash is tight and we have to restrict our activities, but we are stepping up the leafletting campaign with the help of all our supporters.

We appreciate this assistance. If you keep supporting us we will keep on fighting! Financial help is urgently needed. Arrange for a Magnet striker to speak at your trade union meeting.

*Contact Ian Crammond, 109 Jedburgh Drive, Darlington. Tel: 01325 282389.*

## *Hillingdon*

*THE picket line continues despite Unison leadership's withdrawal of support and the Hillingdon Hospital Trust winning a High Court case for posesssion of the land* where the picket was set up.

The 53 sacked workers have won great respect for their courageous 18-month battle, so much so that the local council have given them a mess room on council-owned land adjacent to the original picket line. The hospital thought it owned the land!

### MEMBERS

Some of the pickets cried (with laughter) when they heard how distressed management was. And now Pall Mall, the agency labour company that sacked the Unison members has been criticised for 'poor management' and put up for sale by the Davis Service Group after showing an operating margin of a mere 0.3 per cent — £200,000 profit on £75.6 million.

Unison members are being asked to investigate the union's annual conference resolution submitted by Hillingdon and Harefield Hospitals Branch. The secretary, Florence Portugal, says that the resolution was carried at a meeting on 20 January. Not only did the strikers not receive a notice of this 'meeting' but the resolution contains results of Industrial Tribunal hearings which were not known until 14 February!

Unison members are asked to prioritise the other Hillingdon motions at the conference, particularly No.76. Send support and donations to Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign (HSSC) c/o 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Mddx. HA6 1TG. 01895-250781/0956 135311.

# Book review

***SOLIDARITY ON THE WATERFRONT***: The Liverpool lockout 1995/6

By Michael Lavalette and Jane Kennedy Published by Liver Press 1996, £5.95 (proceeds to the Liverpool Dockers' dispute fund)

I began to read this book with a certain pleasurable anticipation.

Michael Lavalette and Jane Kennedy are two lecturers from Liverpool University, sympathetic to the dockers' struggle.

They had interviewed dockers and attended mass meetings. But I was disappointed. Instead of discussing a living movement Lavalette and Kennedy have made dead assertions, grafting on to what could have been a useful record of the dispute, their own comments and conclusions:

- the dockers' strategy in the international campaign was based on a failure to move British workers and an avoidance of a clash with the T&G leadership;
- that real alliances for struggle can only be made with rank-and-file workers and not with leaders; the dockers did not seek to move the rank-and-file abroad.

built principled solidarity in the best traditions of the docks and trade unionism — *an injury to one is an injury to all!*

They summed up the essence of their struggle with a charter whose demands struck a chord in every corner of the globe.

They demand full reinstatement and the removal of the scabs and Drake International.

They have refused £28,000 to hand over hostages — the 80 Torside workers and the so-called 'militants' — in a bargain with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

That is contrary to the policy of trade union leaders.

Five hundred men and women took on a powerful company and its arrogant economic advisors, like the Thatcherite, Minford.

Any mistakes they have made, fade into insignificance in that context. In itself, it has been the greatest blow that could be struck against philistine leaders of the trade unions and Labour Party.

not the responsibility of the dockers alone.

Lavalette and Kennedy report that that shop stewards from across the north-west region passed 'a motion calling for containers intended to be put through Liverpool to be blacked' and they say that the stewards failed to activate this campaign.

They dissolve difficult questions into slogans and complaints. Isn't it necessary to look at the policies of their own organisation, the Socialist Workers Party, with a critical eye? The SWP attended the first two meetings of the dockers' support group in Liverpool and no more.

Where were they in relation to that campaign? Or to the campaign that has gone on weekly in Liverpool at the Argos stores and in the distributive workers' union, demanding they cease shipping goods through Liverpool? The SWP is the biggest of the socialist groups — with a reported membership of 7,000.

That could be a force in helping the needed response to the dockers' dispute, organizing to assist its aims, and fully integrated in the dockers' support groups, in consultation with the dockers' committee which is in the firing line.

Read this book to learn more about the method of sectarianism which must be overcome if the SWP is to take part in rebuilding working-class consciousness and confidence in itself.

**Bill Hunter,**
Author of '*They knew why they fought: unofficial struggle and leadership on the docks, 1945-1989*' Index Books 1994.

For discussion on this book and other information on the docks' dispute see Labournet web site: http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/

**2 April: In front of police and armed guards, 120 sacked dockers occupied the Norse Irish ferry, gave the scabs a few home truths and marched out again. Point made!**

But the historic series of actions in January in ports throughout the world came out of a conflict with the leadership of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) and the International Transport workers Federation (ITF)! It led to the resignation of Jack Heyman — an ITF inspector on the west coast of the USA. Even the authors have to say that it was not possible for the ITF leaders and Bill Morris to 'sweep the [dockers'] dispute under the carpet'.

The dockers' emissaries, starting with the official unions, searched for militant supporters. They simply argued their case wherever they could — often in ports of which they had no previous knowledge — and they *did* move thousands of rank-and-file dockers to take actions.

Together with the Women of the Waterfront they have

The abysmal retreats of the trade union leaders in the face of the anti-trade union laws, mean that today the dockers have had to take the hard road of agitation and persistent education.

In this they are assisted by linking with the upsurge in Europe and the rest of the world. Their work and development, since 1995, is a mark of the beginning of a rise of working class struggle in Britain.

One of the many refreshing things about the Liverpool dispute has been its openness to all socialist tendencies, but this places a responsibility before all of us — the patient work of explanation and agitation is

# How our men were treated. . .

WOMEN OF THE WATERFRONT was formed in October 1995, in support of their husbands, sons, partners and fathers who were unjustly sacked by Mersey Dock and Harbour Company (MDHC) in September 1995. Their only crime (as it was called) was to stand up for their rights and not to cross a picket line.

Although the men agreed to return to work after approximately nine days, MDHC locked them out. This has now been going on for over 18 months. The Women have been strong in fighting alongside their men.

### TRUTH

We are housewives, not politicians, but we can express ourselves to any group of people, irrespective of their position. We just speak from the heart and tell the truth of how our men have been treated since the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS) in 1989.

By 1995 our men were ill and dejected because of:

- long hours of work and telephone calls to return to work, after having only 4-5 hours' sleep;
- being told to clean warehouses — to scrub them over and over and then the warehouses were demolished;
- having to work 114 hours over a three-week period and overtime only being paid after that number of hours;
- then finding that when it was their turn to be paid overtime, they were suddenly not required and the person who had worked fewer than 114 hours would be called in, until his hours were used up.

And so it went on. MDHC controlled our whole lives. Not a man knew where and when he was required, nor whether he could go to bed early, plan a day out with his family, or even have a social evening out.

We were told that our men would have their work rota 12 months in advance. No such thing! On many occasions the men worked three shifts in the one week and then on their day off they had to catch up on their sleep.

All this had to come to a head, and had the women known that all the families were suffering like this, then maybe the women would have put a picket line up a long time ago. But we did not know one another and we each thought it was only our men who were being treated like this.

### BEST

The MDHC never gave the workforce a social get-together or maybe we would have all realised what was happening. Just a few weeks before they sacked them, MDHC hailed the Liverpool dockers as 'the best in Europe' after making £38 billion *profit* for the company.

Still the *fight goes on*. The women are more of a thorn in the side of MDHC than are the men! The company doesn't know how to handle the Women of the Waterfront . . . we are unpredictable.

Secretary: Irene Campbell: c/o T&G, Transport House, Islington Liverpool L3 8EQ.

## THE DOCKERS QUID

**If you would like to donate one pound a week (£4.34 a month) to the dockers and their families, please fill in the form below and send it to your bank.**

### Monthly Standing Order Mandate

To: _____ (name of your bank)

At: _____

_____ (address of your bank)

**Please pay: MIDLAND BANK, Norton Street, Liverpool**
**Account No: 01775480 Sort Code 40-20-12**
**For the credit of 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Appeal Fund'**

For the sum of: four pounds and thirty four pence (words)

£4.34 (figures)

Starting on: _____ (date)

And every: _____ (day of the month)

Name of account to be debited: _____

Account No. _____ (figures)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**If you would like to send a cheque donation, then please make it payable to: 'Merseyside Docks Shop Stewards' Appeal Fund' and send it to:**
**Mr J Davies, Sec. Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS.**

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Address: _____

_____

*Please photocopy and use to campaign for funds!*

# REINSTATEMENT

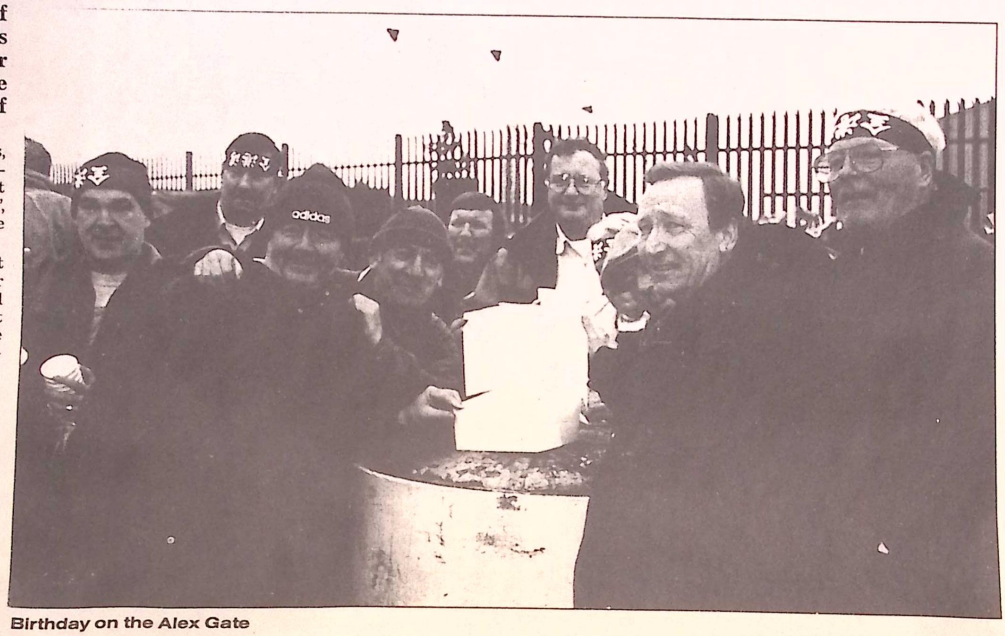
## Basis for dockers' labour hiring plan

**REINSTATEMENT of the sacked dockers is the only basis for discussions about the future operation of the port of Liverpool.**

For the past 18 months, since their sacking for refusing to cross a picket line, 'dockers in, scabs out!', has been the basis of the dockers' fight.

To this end, in the last issue of Dockers Charter Jimmy Nolan announced the idea of the Mersey Port Shop Stewards Committee for a Labour Supply/Hiring Hall plan.

They have now drawn up a paper with an outline of their proposals. This was presented to a meeting of the Steering Group of the International Dockers' Committee, and it was agreed at a mass meeting on 28 March.



**Birthday on the Alex Gate**

### LABOUR

The International Steering Group carried a resolution supporting 'the Liverpool dockers' initiative of obtaining reinstatement through the mechanism of a labour supply company', endorsing the criteria for reinstatement set out in the Mersey Port Shop Stewards' proposal, and stating that 'these proposals have been made in a genuine attempt to ... return the port of Liverpool to normality.'

But 'until reinstatement has been achieved, the historic soldiarity enacted by longshoremen and dockers throughout the world should continue. Despite the claims of Mersey Docks, the global blockade of the Port of Liverpool is having a dramatic impact upon trade'.

And the Steering Group asserted 'its determination to go forward to further develop its global boycott of Merseyside. Various other actions will be considered including direct interventions with shipping consortiums using the Port of Liverpool'.

### ACTION

Referrring to 'the historic action of 20 January 1997' when 105 ports in 27 countries took action in solidarity with the sacked Liverpool dockers, the Steering Committee reaffirmed 'its opposition to the processes of privatization, de-regulation and casualisation'.

Mike Carden, presenting the paper to the mass meeting, explained: 'The primary function of the new stevedoring company we envisage is the provision of a totally professional workforce trained and experienced to deal with all cargo-handling requirements in the Port of Liverpool.' But it is the potential areas of trading activity and the existence of scab, agency labour that is proving a sticking point in negotiations.

### SCABS

Carden said that whereas the Committee saw a new labour supply company offering permanent labour with proven levels of skill, experience and dedication as operating in all areas of the port, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company wanted to limit such labour supply to the general cargo and timber areas, and would not agree to the removal of scabs and labour agencies.

He added: 'As far as the Irish traffic is concerned, this has been fundamentally restricted since September 1995. But with planning permission to build a river berth there is the practical possibility of creating new *real* employment opportunites as opposed to *casual* employment.'

The main bone of contention is the Seaforth Container Terminal. This, and the Grain Terminal are contracted by Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to labour agency, Drake Port Services, client of Drake International.

Carden pointed to cost factors relating to the contractors' fees, which he said 'raise serious doubts as to the financial justification of employing contract/casual labour in an area of the docks considered pivotal to the port's success.'

### CONTRADICTION

*In their paper the Mersey Port Shop Stewards point to the contradiction between the actions of MDHC today and its 'preferred business philosophy. . . maintained throughout the national industrial upheavals of 1989, brought on by the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme, up to September 1995'.*

He referred to the Port of Liverpool Handbook, in which Mr. Trevor Furlong, Mersey Docks Chief Executive stated in 1993: *'Most UK ports now operate with workforces employed on a casual basis with the lack of professional commitment that implies. We have taken the view that shipowners and shippers will benefit from having the same skilled men handling their cargo each and every day of the year . . . men who appreciate the value of cargo, whether it's timber or high-value CKD's.*

*'That policy shows in the professionalism and performance of Liverpool today. There is no doubt that we can match and better anything offered in other UK and European ports, but on a much wider range of traffics and trades than most.'*

The stewards' paper maintains that 'a "market" exists founded by the Liverpool dockers who provided labour in the Port of Liverpool for many generations'.

'This philosophy and strategy provides the central focus of the Liverpool dockers' proposals to attain the principle of reinstatement,' reported Carden. This is why the stewards say that MDHC's decision to use Drake International's casual labour 'does not, and will never, create a satisfactory image of a professional port'. He said that the stewards had 'sighted the accident reports' and 'acquired letters of complaint from shipowners relating damage and theft of cargo and failure to provide adequate documentation skills; custom clearance etc;' and he refered to 'the recent imposition by Mersey Docks of random drug and alcohol abuse tests.'

### POLITICAL

The stewards conclude that 'Mersey Docks' business prospectus and more importantly, its utilzation of casual/contract labour, owes more to a series of political decisions rather than the pursuance of a sane business initiative'. And they say that the success of their proposals to establish a labour supply company 'essentially rests upon its ability to provide for all labour/skill requirements' in the port.

They explain that upon 'full and total reinstatement' of all the sacked dockers with protection of all pension rights, the 'dockers themselves will be able to evaluate the precise number of those seeking retirement.

Among the sacked dockers there is a current skill-mix which 'encompasses adequate expertise in the various skill requirements' and it will be necessary to 'embark upon a training programme to ensure both the immediate needs, potential growth of customer requirements and future recruitment'.

The stewards acknowledge that 'a more detailed appraisal will be required but such a process can only be developed once the fundamental principle for reinstatement has been achieved. Furthermore, the removal of the contract with Drake International is vital to the prospects of permanent labour being returned to the port.'

In the meantime the Transport and General Workers Union general executive council decided to jointly finance, with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, an ***independent*** firm of business consultants to prepare a report on the viability of the proposed labour hiring scheme. (See report, this page.)

# Bill Morris hands £25,000 to 'shares scandal' firm

**SACKED Liverpool dockers are insulted, hurt, and angry by the action of their union's general secretary, Bill Morris which, some describe as a 'conspiracy' against them and their families.**

The Transport and General Workers Union has paid £25,000 and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) a further £25,000 to KPMG Peat Marwick — the financial consultants involved in the Medway Port shares scandal, and *the company that acts for MDHC* — to produce a plan for the supply of labour to the port of Liverpool . . . *(by the sacked Liverpool dockers!)*

What are the facts? In December 1992 over 300 Medway dockers were dismissed — deemed to have 'sacked themselves' — when they refused the 'downsizing' of their agreed contract presented by Medway Ports Managing Director, Peter Vincent.

The new contract involved the introduction of casual working, extended 12-hour shifts and wage cuts of several thousand pounds per annum.

Once dismissed, Medway dockers were forced to sell back to management, particularly Vincent, shares they had bought in the company. These shares were valued at £2.50 in March 1993 by none other than KPMG Peat Marwick.

Six months later, in what became known as the 'Medway Deal' Vincent made a cool £12 million overnight when MDHC cashed in 7 per cent of government shareholdings and bought Medway Ports for £102.7 million based on a new valuation by KPMG Peat Marwick of the very same shares — at £37.25 each!

At the same time, Liverpool dockers were being served with an ultimatum — to accept radical changes in their contracts — 12-hour shifts and wage cuts, or they would be sacked.

### FIGHT

A two-and-a-half years' legal action by the sacked Medway dockers against KPMG Peat Marwick ended when there was an out-of-court settlement on 5 July 1996 to pay £1.6 million and costs to the dockers.

By that time the sacked Liverpool dockers had been fighting for reinstatement for ten months after being sacked for refusing to cross a picket line mounted by young dockers employed by MDHC client, Torside Limited. MDHC diverted shipping from Liverpool to their new port of Medway.

The Liverpool dockers were calling for a public inquiry into the dubious industrial and financial actions of MDHC and their consultants, especially MDHC's purchase of the port of Medway and the sacking of its 300 dockers.

Unfortunately the out-of-court selttlement robbed the Liverpool men and their families of the possibility of the facts of the case being placed before judge and jury which would have been open to public examination.

KPMG moved to new offices as close as possible to their principal client — the MDHC — in its Princes Dock property, developed with the aid of Eurogrants!

*It is to this very same KPMG that Bill Morris has now handed over £25,000 of union funds!*

Housmans Bookshop
and the Porcupine Bookcellar
welcome
the March for Social Justice
We stock:
the DocKers T-shirts, the Dockers Charter and all the greetings cards, together with a wide range of socialist and radical books and magazines (new and second hand)
5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, London N1 9DX 0171 837 4473
JOBS! HOMES! A FUTURE!
Victory to the dockers!

# DOCKERS CHARTER

## Our thanks to Robbie, Steve and PFA

MILLIONS of people saw Liverpool's Robbie Fowler score his second goal in the Cup Winners' Cup match against SK Brann on 19 March, and then they saw him celebrate by lifting his shirt to reveal a tee shirt with the message 'Support the 500 sacked dockers'.

For 18 months there has been a virtual news blockade on the dockers' fight for reinstatement. This action, shared by team–mate Steve McManaman brought more media coverage for the Liverpool dockers than anything that has happened so far. Robbie Fowler has been fined £900 by UEFA.

On behalf of the 500 dockers, their families and supporters, Mersey Port Shop Stewards chairman, Jimmy Nolan wrote a letter of thanks to the two young footballers: Your courageous statement gave heart to so many ordinary people whose pleas for justice go unheard.

I am sure you are aware that our struggle is not just for Liverpool dockers, but for so many others who experience injustice in our society. . . I express our deepest gratitude for your expression of solidarity at a time when some would believe such views irrelevant in our selfish society.'

To the Professional Footballers' Association's Gordon Taylor, Jimmy wrote: 'As trade unionists, [Robbie Fowler and Steve McManaman] have expressed their own statements in support of the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers over the last 19 months. Much of this support has been enacted with modesty and in a private manner. . . please understand our gratitude and respect for these two fine footballers' expression of support.

We cannot allow harm to come to such caring and thoughtful young working class lads. . . I take this opportunity to thank your union for its continued support of the Liverpool dockers.

# Pause for a moment and listen. . .

FLYWOOD camp, on the side of a hill, is a series of tunnels, treetop houses and tents. There you can meet people who simply say: 'Pause for a moment and listen!' No — not to their arguments but to nature!

Runway 2 at Manchester Airport will involve the destruction of: 43 ponds, 15 km of hedgerow, seven hectares of mature woodland and over 1,000 acres of greenbelt.

The River Bolin will be culverted, forced to flow through a concrete tunnel. What was once a living landscape, walked and enjoyed by local people, will be fenced, destroyed and enclosed. And when the land is enclosed, say the camp dwellers, so are our minds, our imaginations and our hopes.

Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, found the 'habitat mitigation package' in the airport's plans 'impressive'. 'Tell that to the badgers, birds, bats, great-crested newts, squirrels and other animals killed or displaced to make way for the runway,' say the environmentalists.

### VALUE

*Their arguments need more than a second thought.* 'Animals, plants and woodlands have their own value, independent of the one which humans place on them — they deserve respect,' say the young people living in the tents and the treetops. 'And they provide us with a much-needed connection to the land.

They remind us that we are part of nature, and dependent on it, no matter how much modern urban living seeks to persuade us that we can live healthily in the concrete towns and cities.'

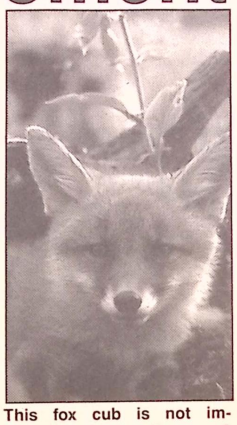
'If we cannot respect our environment, how can we respect each other and ourselves?' they say.

'It is true that nowadays environmentalists are beginning to win the ecological arguments against damaging developments, but they are ultimately unsuccessful because the developer claims that there are jobs in the offing. But is this really true?'

### TRUTH

In 1991 Manchester Airport claimed that 50,000 new jobs would be created; in 1995 they said that it would be 18,700; at the Public Inquiry this figure was further reduced by a Manchester City Council expert to 8,000-9,000 jobs; in February 1997, Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Industry estimated that 5,000 jobs would be created.

*The truth is that there has* been no independent study of possible employment creation effects. The only consistent trend is the *lowering* of estimates for new jobs as time has passed. And recent experience shows that any new employment is likely to be low-paid short-term contract jobs. The second runway will lead to job relocation in the region rather than job creation. It will not aid urban regeneration.



**This fox cub is not impressed with the Runway 2 'Habitat mitigation package'**

'The 'experts' tell us that Runway 2 is good for the economy. But if the investment of £172 million were spent on other sectors of the economy, such as energy efficiency or education, far more jobs would be created than at the airport. Manchester City Council estimates that it costs £76,464 to sustain a job at the airport for a year — compared to £26,913 in education.'

A group of Liverpool dockers took some much-needed supplies to Flywood camp. Our readers might like to follow their lead.

Flywood Camp on 0958 451525 to offer food, support and equipment.
Coalition Against Runway 2 (CAR2) at Manchester Friends of the Earth on 0161-834-8221, fax: 0161- 83408187.
Address: One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS. *Donations welcome.*
e-mail: campaign@mfoe.u-net.com

# Health and Safety at stake

**SKILLED workers have been picketing the gates of Project Aerospace Ltd. Coventry, since management imposed a 'lock out' on 10 December 1996.**

The 41 workers, members of the Manufacturing Science Finance union (MFS), were told, without consultation, that they must sign a new contract 'or else'! This occurred just a few hours before the management were due to meet the union's full-time official to discuss the workers' grievances, such as:

- they have to work in an asbestos-riddled environment without adequate ventilation;
- they have no pension or proper sick scheme;
- their pay has fallen behind, and scant attention is paid to their safety when operating machines.

Hughie Paine, senior steward, said: 'We are 100 per cent determined to win a just victory in this dispute, forced on us by a vindictive mangement. They hope that cold, wet and starvation will force us to capitulate, leaving them to choose who they want, working on their terms. The company has refused to negotiate with the union, even via ACAS.'

### LEGAL

After exhausting all domestic procedures with the company and carrying out the legal requirements of an industrial action ballot, the sheet metal workers had been taking limited action — an overtime ban and a one-day per week stoppage of work — since November 1996.

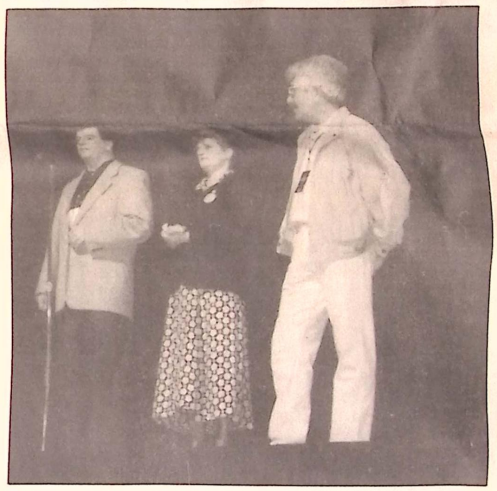
The workers were extremely concerned about various dangerous working conditions, including a badly damaged/broken asbestos roof in the factory, water cascading down onto electrical machinery, diesel fork lift trucks being used in confined areas, and safety guards missing from presses.

The company's response to all these issues was an offer to increase wages by three per cent and an outright flat refusal to discuss anything else.

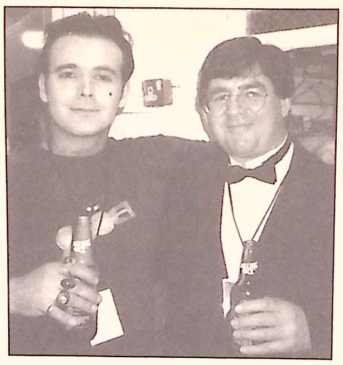
All donations and messages of support to the picket line in Canal Road, off Cross Road, in Foleshill, Coventry, or to Project Aerospace Dispute Fund, Coventry Trades Council, Unit 15, The Arches, Spon End, Coventry CV1 3JQ.

Speakers available:
phone: 01203 474261
or mobile 0976 971796

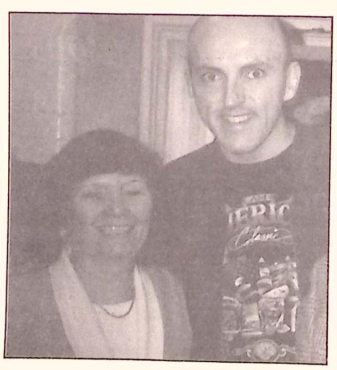
# Comedians support dockers



● Above: Mickie and Sylvia Tighe and Nick Silvano explain the sacked dockers' case to a packed house at the comedians' benefit for the Liverpool dockers.



● Top left: Rob Newman with sacked docker Tony Delahunty, backstage.



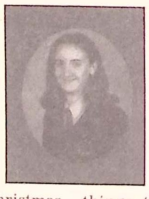
● Bottom left: Lee Hurst with Cathy Connolly. Cathy and her husband Dennis won their tickets at the dockers' mass meeting raffle.

● Below: an enthusiastic audience clapped, cheered, laughed and raved, at over 50 comedians.

# Dockers' Poem

*By Danielle Mitchell*

**Our lives have changed in every way,**
**Dad goes to the picket line every day;**
**Mum goes to conferences all across the land.**
**My brothers and I, by Mum and Dad we stand.**
**The meetings and pickets we love to go**
**Sit and talk to the other kids, who we now know.**
**Rallies and celebrations we love to take part,**
**The dockers have a special place in my heart.**
**The courage they have shown,**
**The support worldwide has grown.**
**The fight still goes on, until we win.**
**SCABS OUT, DOCKERS IN!**



MY name is Danielle Mitchell. I am 16 years of age and I'm a sacked dockers' daughter. Before my Dad was sacked, I took little things for granted. Now my Dad has been sacked we can't have things that we would usually get if we were going somewhere. The thing I wanted for Christmas more than anything in the world was for my Dad and the other 499 dockers to be reinstated. That would have been a great Christmas present for everyone! Whilst my Dad has been sacked, I have had two brilliant holidays with the dockers. Even though we never left England, they were still 'out of this world!' Over the Christmas and Easter holidays, I don't care about gifts and materialistic things that people give and receive, as long as my family are together and all the other 499 families are happy and sharing laughs with each other, then that's fine.

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